

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
CORPUS CHRISTI DIVISION**

MAVIS CALDWELL,

Plaintiff,

v.

BANK OF AMERICA, N.A.,

Defendant.

CIVIL COMPLAINT

CASE NO. 2:19-cv-00077

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

COMPLAINT

NOW comes MAVIS CALDWELL (“Plaintiff”), by and through her attorneys, Sulaiman Law Group, Ltd. (“Sulaiman”), complaining as to the conduct of BANK OF AMERICA, N.A. (“Defendant”), as follows:

NATURE OF THE ACTION

1. Plaintiff brings this action for damages pursuant to the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (“TCPA”) under 47 U.S.C. §227 *et seq.*, and the Texas Debt Collection Act (“TDCA”) under Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392 *et seq.*, for Defendant’s unlawful conduct.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

2. This action arises under and is brought pursuant to the TCPA. Subject matter jurisdiction is conferred upon this Court by 47 U.S.C §227, 28 U.S.C. §§1331 and 1367, as the action arises under the laws of the United States.

3. Venue is proper in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1391 as Defendant conducts business in the Southern District of Texas and a substantial portion the events or omissions giving rise to the claims occurred within the Southern District of Texas.

PARTIES

4. Plaintiff is a natural person over 18 years-of-age residing in Nueces County, Texas, which is located within the Southern District of Texas.

5. Plaintiff is a “person” as defined by 47 U.S.C. §153(39).

6. Defendant is engaged in the business of offering credit services and collecting or attempting to collect, directly or indirectly, debts owed or due using the mail and telephone from consumers across the country, including consumers located in the state of Texas. Defendant a corporation headquartered in North Carolina, with its principal place of business located at 100 North Tyron Street, Charlotte, North Carolina 28255.

7. Defendant is a “person” as defined by 47 U.S.C. §153(39).

8. Defendant acted through its agents, employees, officers, members, directors, heirs, successors, assigns, principals, trustees, sureties, subrogees, representatives and insurers at all times relevant to the instant action.

FACTS SUPPORTING CAUSES OF ACTION

9. Several years ago, Plaintiff obtained a line a credit through Defendant.

10. Around late 2017, Plaintiff suffered through a personal tragedy that caused her severe injuries and hospitalization.

11. Consequently, due to financial hardship, Plaintiff fell behind on her scheduled payments to Defendant, thus incurring debt (“subject debt”).

12. Around late 2017, Plaintiff began receiving calls to her cellular phone, (972) XXX-4447, from Defendant seeking to collect on the subject debt.

13. At all times relevant to the instant action, Plaintiff was the sole subscriber, owner, and operator of the cellular phone ending in -4447. Plaintiff is and has always been financially responsible for the cellular phone and its services.

14. Defendant mainly uses the phone number (800) 432-1000 when placing phone calls to Plaintiff's cellular phone. Upon information and belief, Defendant has used additional phone numbers when placing calls to Plaintiff's cellular phone.

15. Upon information and belief, the above-referenced phone number ending in -1000 is regularly utilized by Defendant during its debt collection activity.

16. During answered calls, Plaintiff has been subjected to a noticeable pause, causing Plaintiff to say "hello" several times, before being connected to a live representative.

17. Upon speaking with one of Defendant's representatives, Plaintiff was informed that Defendant was attempting to collect upon the subject debt.

18. Plaintiff notified Defendant that she was unable to make payment and demanded that Defendant stop contacting her.

19. Despite Plaintiff's efforts, Defendant continued to regularly call her cellular phone for several months thereafter.

20. Plaintiff has received not less than 20 phone calls from Defendant since asking it to stop calling.

21. Frustrated over Defendant's conduct, Plaintiff spoke with Sulaiman regarding her rights, resulting in expenses.

22. Plaintiff has been unfairly and unnecessarily harassed by Defendant's actions.

23. Plaintiff has suffered concrete harm as a result of Defendant's actions, including but not limited to, invasion of privacy, aggravation that accompanies collection telephone calls,

emotional distress, increased risk of personal injury resulting from the distraction caused by the never-ending calls, increased usage of her telephone services, loss of cellular phone capacity, diminished cellular phone functionality, decreased battery life on her cellular phone, and diminished space for data storage on her cellular phone.

COUNT I – VIOLATIONS OF THE TELEPHONE CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

24. Plaintiff repeats and realleges paragraphs 1 through 23 as though fully set forth herein.

25. The TCPA, pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(1)(iii), prohibits calling persons on their cellular phone using an automatic telephone dialing system (“ATDS”) or prerecorded messages without their consent. The TCPA, under 47 U.S.C. § 227(a)(1), defines an ATDS as “equipment which has the capacity...to store or produce telephone numbers to be called, using a random or sequential number generator; and to dial such numbers.”

26. Defendant used an ATDS in connection with its communications directed towards Plaintiff’s cellular phone. The noticeable pause that Plaintiff experienced upon answering Defendant’s calls, as well as the fact that Plaintiff had to repeatedly say “hello” before she was connected with a live representative, is instructive that an ATDS was being utilized to generate the phone calls. Additionally, Defendant’s continued contacts after Plaintiff demanded that the phone calls stop further demonstrates Defendant’s use of an ATDS. Moreover, the nature and frequency of Defendant’s contacts establishes the involvement of an ATDS.

27. Defendant violated the TCPA by placing at least 20 phone calls to Plaintiff’s cellular phone using an ATDS without her consent. Any consent that Plaintiff *may* have given to Defendant was specifically revoked by Plaintiff’s demands that it cease contacting her.

28. The calls placed by Defendant to Plaintiff were regarding collection activity and not for emergency purposes as defined by the TCPA under 47 U.S.C. §227(b)(1)(A)(i).

29. Under the TCPA, pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(3)(B), Defendant is liable to Plaintiff for at least \$500.00 per call. Moreover, Defendant's willful and knowing violations of the TCPA should trigger this Honorable Court's ability to triple the damages to which Plaintiff is otherwise entitled to under 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(3)(C).

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, MAVIS CALDWELL, respectfully requests that this Honorable Court enter judgment in her favor as follows:

- a. Declaring that the practices complained of herein are unlawful and violate the aforementioned statutes and regulations;
- b. Awarding Plaintiff damages of at least \$500.00 per phone call and treble damages pursuant to 47 U.S.C. §§ 227(b)(3)(B)&(C);
- c. Awarding Plaintiff costs and reasonable attorney fees;
- d. Enjoining Defendant from further contacting Plaintiff seeking payment of the subject consumer debt; and
- e. Awarding any other relief as this Honorable Court deems just and appropriate.

COUNT II – VIOLATIONS OF THE TEXAS DEBT COLLECTION ACT

30. Plaintiff restates and realleges paragraphs 1 through 29 as though fully set forth herein.

31. Plaintiff is a "consumer" as defined by Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.001(1).

32. Defendant is a "debt collector" as defined by Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.001(6).

33. The subject debt is a "consumer debt" as defined by Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.001(2) as it is an obligation, or alleged obligation, arising from a transaction for personal, family, or household purposes.

a. Violations of TDCA § 392.302

34. The TDCA, pursuant to Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.302(4), states that "a debt collector may not oppress, harass, or abuse a person by causing a telephone to ring repeatedly or continuously,

or making repeated or continuous telephone calls, with the intent to harass a person at the called number.”

35. Defendant violated the TDCA when it continued to call Plaintiff’s cellular phone at least 20 times after she notified it to stop calling. The repeated contacts were made with the hope that Plaintiff would succumb to the harassing behavior and ultimately submit a payment. Rather than understanding Plaintiff’s situation and abiding by her wishes, Defendant continued in its harassing campaign of phone calls in hopes of extracting payment.

36. Upon being told to stop calling, Defendant had ample reason to be aware that it should not continue its harassing calling campaign. Yet, Defendant consciously chose to continue placing systematic calls to Plaintiff’s cellular phone knowing that its conduct was unwelcome.

b. Violations of TDCA § 392.304

37. The TDCA, pursuant to Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.304(19) prohibits a debt collector from “using any . . . false representation or deceptive means to collect a debt or obtain information concerning a consumer.”

38. Defendant violated the TDCA through the implicit misrepresentations made on phone calls placed to Plaintiff’s cellular phone. Through its conduct, Defendant misleadingly represented to Plaintiff that it had the lawful ability to continue contacting her cellular phone using an automated system absent her consent. Such lawful ability was revoked upon Plaintiff demanding that Defendant stop calling her cellular phone, illustrating the deceptive nature of Defendant’s conduct.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, MAVIS CALDWELL, respectfully requests that this Honorable Court enter judgment in her favor as follows:

- a. Declaring that the practices complained of herein are unlawful and violate the aforementioned statutes and regulations;
- b. Entitling Plaintiff to injunctive relief pursuant to Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.403(a)(1).

- c. Awarding Plaintiff actual damages, pursuant to Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.403(a)(2).
- d. Awarding Plaintiff punitive damages, in an amount to be determined at trial, for the underlying violations;
- e. Awarding Plaintiff costs and reasonable attorney fees, pursuant to Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.403(b);
- f. Enjoining Defendant from further contacting Plaintiff seeking payment of the subject consumer debt; and
- g. Awarding any other relief as this Honorable Court deems just and appropriate.

Dated: March 7, 2019

Respectfully submitted,

s/ Nathan C. Volheim (Lead Attorney)
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